



Maricopa County

NEWS RELEASE

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Maricopa County Confirms First Human Case of West Nile Virus

Mosquito Samples Also Test Positive for the Virus

Phoenix (June 21, 2007) – The 2007 West Nile virus season has officially begun in Maricopa County. Today, the Maricopa County Department of Public Health and the Arizona Department of Health Services confirmed that a West Valley man in his 60s is Maricopa County's first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) this season. The man has been released from a local Valley hospital and is currently recovering from the virus.

"Our first human case of the season serves as a reminder that West Nile virus is not going away in Maricopa County," said Dr. Bob England, director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health. "We have seen over the last few years that this virus can affect anyone, in any part of our Valley. It is important that we all take steps to protect ourselves."

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with the virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite.

Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms, such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, and even death. People over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

Health officials say Valley residents should be aware that although the majority of people who become infected with the virus will show no symptoms at all, for a small percentage of people it can be serious or even fatal.

"West Nile virus is back in Maricopa County this year," said Susan Gerard, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services. "We can't stress enough that the more we can control our mosquito population, the more we can control this virus. This means that we all must make an effort to rid our homes of any standing water where mosquitoes can breed."

The Arizona Department of Health Services reports mosquito activity in four Arizona counties, Maricopa, Coconino, Yuma, and Yavapai.

In addition to the first human case of WNV this year, positive mosquito samples have also been confirmed by the Maricopa County Department of Environmental Services in the cities of Chandler, Phoenix, and Avondale.

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"We found these West Nile virus positive mosquitoes by routinely collecting and testing mosquitoes at sites throughout the Valley," said John Power, director of the Maricopa County Department of Environmental Services. "It's crucial that people help us prevent the spread of the virus by reporting to our department any mosquito problems, green pools, or standing water, and by working with their neighbors to get rid of mosquito breeding areas on their property."

Residents are encouraged to mosquito-proof their home by taking the following precautions:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around your property. Drain standing water in potted plants, tires, and other containers.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Keep fountains, animal troughs, and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris.

Eliminating stagnant water around your property will stop mosquitoes from breeding. However, it is very important to avoid all mosquito bites. Apply insect repellent as directed by the product's directions, wear long clothing, and avoid outdoor activity after dusk and before dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

This is the first laboratory confirmation of a human case of West Nile virus infection in Maricopa County this year. In 2006, Maricopa County reported 75 confirmed West Nile virus cases, and 6 deaths.

Maricopa County and the Arizona Department of Health Services continue to have an enhanced surveillance program, which includes sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

For more information on West Nile virus, public health assistance, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, call (602) 506-0700 or visit www.WestNileAZ.org and www.maricopa.gov/wnv

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